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NONFICTION

The Gun: A "Biography" of the Gun that Killed John F. Kennedy, by Henry S. Bloomgarden (Grossman, $6.95). The Mannlicher-Carcano rifle with serial number C2766 was made in Italy in 1940, saw action (as its ultimate victim did) in World War II, was retired to a warehouse and became a part of manipulations involving the economic prospects of Italian villagers, American businessmen, shippers, a mail-order firm; like others of its kind, it was the subject of impassioned debates, laws, restrictions and intense lobbying. The story of how and where it was made and of its gradual progress into the hands of an assassin has some of the chilling interest found in suspense novels, with the added dimension that it is horribly true.